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THE
Commonweal

RICHARD HORCHLER

Managing the News

De Gaulle's Would-Be Assassins

ROBERT BARRAT

For My Father's Grandchildren

JOHN COGLEY

A POEM BY CARLO BETOCCHI • CHRIST IN THE MODERN NOVEL: SYMBOL, MYTH AND IMAGE • NADINE GORDIMER AND SOUTH AFRICA • SELECTED ESSAYS, 1934-1943, OF SIMONE WEIL

VOLUME LXXVII, NO. 26 MARCH 22, 1963 TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

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Battle of the Giants

ACCORDING to a recent news item, the Chinese Communists have sent colonists to develop the marshlands in Manchuria immediately adjacent to the Soviet border. Most of the new settlers, it is reported with a straight face, are "recently demobilized" veterans of the Chinese Army. I don't know if this development gives Mr. Khrushchev pause, but it would me if I were in his shoes.

Despite periodic peace overtures, the growing split between the two giants of the Communist world is one of the biggest news stories of this or any other decade. The question is: will Russia or China eventually fear and hate the other more than it fears and hates the rest of us?

We have our troubles with de Gaulle, but they are minor compared to the tensions between the Communist allies. Together the two Communist collossi number close to one billion people. With Soviet Russia's military skill and advanced technology and China's vast manpower, they make a formidable combination. Taken separately, they are not paper tigers, but they are a lot less fearsome.

The Soviet Union and China may patch things up, but the quarrel between them goes far back and is serious—too serious for it to be kept in the Communist family. Each side has its suspicions of the other, often well founded, and each side has its list of grievances.

On the level of personalities, Mao was politically if not personally close to Stalin. He does not approve of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization program, especially insofar as this means an end of the hard line approach. Then too there is an element of pride involved: Mao probably regards Khrushchev as a bit of a Johnny-Come-Lately among Communist leaders; he may well think he himself should wear the mantle of the world's No. 1 Communist.

Mao seems to be the Communist ideologue *par excellence*. Khrushchev at least fears the nuclear striking power of the United States. For all his twists and turns, therefore, he has laid down the line of victory short of war, the so-called peaceful coexistence policy. Mao, on the other hand, sees Communist world victory as possible only by means of war and regards Khrushchev as an appeaser who has lost the true faith. With a population of almost seven hundred million people, Mao views the possibility of nuclear war with more equanimity than any other world leader.

Indeed, there is even more to it than that. Khrushchev may well wonder whether China would not like to see an all-out war of annihilation between the U.S.S.R. and the United States which in the end would leave Communist China to pick up the pieces. Right now, however, as a recent issue of *U.S. News and World Report* put it, Mao fears "that Soviet Russia is easing up on the Communist revolution short of Communist domination of the world—and may even be moving toward agreement with the West—while trying to keep Red China in the role of a secondary backward power."

To the non-Communist, much of the tension between Russia and Communist China looks like nothing more than petty ideological squabbling. Thus China supports little Albania in its extraordinary defiance of the Kremlin line, China representatives attack Tito while Khrushchev courts him, Peking bitterly criticizes Khrushchev's no-war-policy over Cuba. But the split between the two giants involves more than verbal tussles. As the recent Chinese broadsides make clear, sharp conflicts of national interest are involved.

Russia has, most significantly, flatly refused to provide China with nuclear weapons. Chinese maps of areas adjacent to the Soviet Union leave the border areas vague; the Indian experience should give Soviet leaders some idea of what this might mean in the future. Compared with China, the Soviet Union is rich; it has, however, provided comparatively little material aid to its Communist ally, and in recent years it has withdrawn many Soviet technicians from China. China invades India; the U.S.S.R. announces that it will stick by its pledge to supply Soviet planes to the Indian government—planes which will clearly be used to check Chinese ambitions.

On top of all this there is the history of the two countries over the centuries. Relations between the two have always been strained at best and warlike at worst. Indeed, much of Siberia which is now under Russian rule was once Chinese territory; there is nothing about Mao to make one think he has forgotten this fact. Add to all this the inescapable touch of racism in Chinese tradition, and you have a potentially explosive situation.

This, I take it, is part of what General de Gaulle has in mind when he dreams of negotiating with the Russians. He wants to persuade them that they are, when all is said and done, Europeans, and that Europe must stand together against the "Yellow Peril," as the General refers to the Chinese.

Clearly this situation holds real dangers for us. A China held in check by Russia's guiding hand is a lot less dangerous than one without the Soviet Union's restraining influence. But there are real possibilities of gain for the Free World in the situation too. The time to exploit them, if it is possible to do so at all, is now, before Communist China gets nuclear weapons of its own.

JAMES O'GARA

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THE COMMONWEAL

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

Arab Unity

SYRIA, which broke away from union with Egypt in the fall of 1961, has now taken a major step in the direction of pan-Arab unity, as a result of the apparently successful revolution there recently. In all except brutality the revolutionary coup in Syria followed that in Iraq of a month ago. In both instances the driving force was the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party (Baath), whose general aims are liberation, socialism and (Arab) unity. But, though the links between Syria and Iraq are now obvious, what is not so plain is the relation between the newly strengthened Baath Party and President Nasser, who is still the single most powerful figure in the Middle East.

Salah al-Bitar, the scholarly leader of the Baath Party and the newly appointed Premier of Syria, spoke recently of Syria's desire to re-establish close, working relations with Egypt. He made it perfectly clear, however, that Syria does not now want any sort of political union with Egypt, but rather a "new entente." Though Iraq is still in the process of consolidating the revolution, when she can turn to external affairs, she may be expected to follow Mr. Bitar's lead in her policy toward Nasser.

Syria and Iraq, if their present governments hold, will represent a substantial power bloc which will make it increasingly difficult for Nasser to press for Arab unity exclusively on his terms. In this sense, their presence will be useful in checking Nasser's demagogic instincts. Two paths toward Arab unity are healthier than one.

The emergence of the Baath Party as an influence in the Arab world is accompanied by a twofold movement. At the same time that the moderate socialist type of reform government is gaining ground, there is a shift toward a stricter policy of neutrality. Both the Syrian and Iraqui revolutions were anti-Communist as much as "anti-reactionary." Apparently, the Communists have been pursuing a disastrous policy in Syria and Egypt, working among minority groups to promote anti-Arabism. In any event, the intention of the Arab world seems to be to secure the Middle East as a strictly non-aligned "buffer" zone between the two world powers.

Understandably, at present the whole Middle East is tense in the aftermath of these new happenings. Jordan, especially, and Israel are extremely uneasy, Jordan because the pan-Arab movement is sworn to the overthrow of the old monarchies, and Israel out of fear of that same movement, which has threatened to drive the Jews into the sea. In the meantime the United States would seem to have no other choice than to be tentative in its formation of a policy toward the new alignments.

NOWHERE are the perils of commitment and the dilemmas of policy in the Middle East more apparent than in the costly war which Nasser has undertaken to support the third recent pan-Arab revolution in Yemen, that lunar land on the Arabian peninsula. This time the coup against the ancient monarchy was broadly republican, and the United States was among the first to recognize the regime. Yet in doing so we found ourselves virtually supporting Nasser's war there, to the increasing embarrassment of our friendly relations with Saudi Arabia, which had come to the aid of the royalist Yemeni tribesmen.

The war has been increasingly costly to Nasser, and its outcome is by no means certain, especially in the North. Consequently, rumors that the United States "wants out" of its Yemeni links are no doubt not without foundation.

At present the United States has hardly any other choice than to support the United Nations' efforts, through Dr. Ralph Bunche and Mr. Ellsworth Bunker, to disengage the Egyptian troops and to persuade the Saudis to cut their arms supply to the Yemeni royalists, if the Egyptians withdraw. While

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it does seem to our advantage to work for the establishment of the republican revolution in Yemen, yet it must also be an immediate objective to prevent Saudi Arabia from entering the Yemeni war in full. The new movements of Arab unity may be the wave of the future, but there is need to see that the reforms they represent are not destroyed in a tidal wave now.

Hospital Workers

IN THE MIDDLE of the summer of 1962, the voluntary non-profit hospitals in New York City were hit with a strike. For many people, the strike was a fearful matter. The operation of a hospital is not something which can simply be suspended while labor differences are worked out; thus it appeared to many that a small minority of aggressive workers was offering a direct threat to the immediate well-being of innocent citizens.

The fears were perhaps understandable. Yet at the same time there could be no doubt that the hospital workers had an eminently justifiable basis for striking. They were—and are—grossly underpaid; they did not—and do not—enjoy the protection of state labor laws; they were—and are—the victims of injustice. Eventually, through the intervention of Governor Rockefeller, the strike was settled. For a time at least the whole question faded from the public eye.

Yet in settling the strike, Governor Rockefeller committed himself to pressing in the legislature to extend collective bargaining rights to voluntary hospital workers. The Governor has now honored that pledge and a bill has been submitted. In essence, the bill provides for the extension of collective bargaining rights, a ban on strikes, and mediation, fact-finding and binding arbitration in cases of unresolved disputes. Hence it is a bill intended to ease the worries of the public concerning uninterrupted hospital service while at the same time granting to hospital workers many of the same fundamental rights now enjoyed by other workers.

It is a good bill and one which should be passed. There is no sound or equitable reason why employees of voluntary non-profit hospitals should be placed in a separate category of workers so far as their basic rights are concerned. As much as any other worker, they need a decent wage, they need decent working conditions, and they need the right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining. It is difficult, if not impossible, to see why they should not enjoy the fullest possible protection of state and federal laws.

To be sure, the voluntary non-profit hospitals

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THE COMMONWEAL
232 Madison Avenue, New York 16, N.Y.

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Second-class postage paid at Norwalk, Conn. Printed in the U.S.A. and published weekly, except biweekly from mid-July to mid-September, at 116 Main St., Norwalk, Conn., by The Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 232 Madison Ave., New York 16, N.Y. MUrray Hill 3-2042.

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U.S. and Canada, $8 a year. Foreign, $10. Single copies 25¢.

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have immense financial difficulties; they constantly face the threat of bankruptcy. Yet the essential question still remains whether the workers in those hospitals should be expected to bear a major part of the burden by receiving scandalous wages and working under difficult conditions. We think not; we believe that the good end served by these hospitals does not justify the unfair means of depriving workers of rights and protections. The workers' needs are neither excessive nor indifferent to the public interest. They are needs common to all workers; they do not disappear because the employer is serving the common good.

As the New York *World-Telegram* put it last summer, "Something will have to be done—by state or city, or both—to keep the voluntary hospitals functioning in the face of mounting costs. But it is long past time for those hospitals to stop balancing their books by taking the deficits from underpaid workers." It is time that the hospitals themselves recognize this; and time as well that the people of New York and other states do likewise.

Supporting Peace

TO MAKE ends meet has not proved easy for the U.N. Financial difficulties have led the World Court to rule that any member two years behind in his dues payments be deprived of his vote in the Assembly. And this is held to apply to assessments for U.N. peace-force operations in the Congo and the Middle East, source of an impending budgetary crisis.

Russia, its satellites and the Arab countries have refused to pay either of these assessments, while France, Portugal and South Africa have held out on the Congo. This country has just announced that it will no longer make up the resulting deficits. These U.N. forces will therefore have to be disbanded.

Whatever mistakes such a force may have made in the Congo in order to forestall a major East-West confrontation, or chaos, few will deny the U.N. force's long success in preventing war in the troubled Middle East. It has demonstrated its potentialities for controlling other threats and outbreaks. Support for the idea is indicated by the warm response in Canada, Brazil, Britain and Scandinavia to a call for five thousand volunteers for a truly international U.N. police force.

Financing is the rub. Some would secure the needed funds through a lottery; others would exploit the riches of Antarctica or outer space, or drill for oil in the Gulf of Mexico. But is there any adequate substitute for proportional contributions regularly made? (Where a member opposed a specific operation, he might be prevailed upon to withhold his veto if his share of the costs were divided up among the other members.) At this stage the only other feasible source of additional U.N. income would appear to be a much wider United Nations fund than now exists, obtained from individual contributions for the support of peace in all the constituent nations.

HERE AND THERE

For My Father's Grandchildren

THE OLDEST among my father's grandchildren are in college now. The first time I ever gave a thought to them was back in the nineteen thirties. Father Coughlin was speaking over the radio one Sunday afternoon, denouncing Roosevelt and the New Deal, and he got to talking about my father's grandchildren. With all the spending Roosevelt was doing, with his WPA, CCC, FHA loans and all the rest, Father Coughlin told my father, these grandchildren of his were going to inherit a crippling national debt that would hopelessly doom them to poverty before they had a chance to run up debts of their own. Father Coughlin bored me, but I perked up at the mention of my father's grandchildren because it suddenly dawned on me that they would be my children.

That, I think, is when I first began to worry about my father's grandchildren. I worried about them some more during the war when I read about military expenditures that dwarfed what Roosevelt had spent on picks and shovels and post office murals a few years earlier. Then, after they made their actual flesh-and-blood appearance, our worries—for there were two of us then to do the worrying—were almost exclusively focused on sudden fevers, poor report cards, teachers' complaints, and ignored curfews.

In fact, I almost forgot about my father's grandchildren and the national debt until the recent flurry over deficit spending. Suddenly I realized that the day of reckoning had crept up on us; the long predicted disaster was ready to strike. Here they were, these grandchildren of my father, with the crushing burden of debt Father Coughlin said would be theirs, all those years ago, and they were blissfully oblivious of their fate. My father's oldest grandchildren have a full quota of private worries these days, but I would be willing to bet my entire file of *Social Justice* that shouldering their

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share of the national debt has never bothered them for a moment.

And I can hardly blame them. On the surface at least the economic future looks a whole lot brighter for them than it did for either my father or me sitting there before the radio back in the nineteen thirties; yet, throughout the intervening years, the government has been spending like a drunken sailor.

It happens that one of my present confreres is a professional economist, so I turned to him for advice. He told me that there never really was much reason to worry about balancing the national budget. Neither my father nor I should have, and my father's grandchildren need not start to. "If they must worry, let them worry about the hydrogen bomb," he said.

Of course, my friend is only one economist. I gather from what I read in certain columns that there are others who hold that he does not know what he is talking about. These fellows, I take it, would tell me that Father Coughlin was absolutely right, back there in the thirties, and that my father's grandchildren, if they don't start fretting about the national debt, will be living in a fool's paradise. They may get away with it, but *their* grandchildren won't, so the sooner they begin to worry, the better.

I have been getting contradictory advice of this kind for more than a quarter century now, and I don't think I should get away much longer with saying it's all too complicated for me. I should have something to tell my father's grandchildren when they ask about lowering taxes and deficit spending and all that. This economist confrere is right here, so I decided I might as well take his word for it as anybody else's.

HERE IS what he advised me to tell them. If it is cockeyed, you can blame him. His name, by the way, is Stanley K. Sheinbaum; you can check his professional credentials in *The Handbook of the American Economic Association.*

First of all, he says that those who make such a pother about balanced budgets are actually in conflict with the capitalist code because, whether they like it or not, they are condoning a situation which results not in Puritan thrift but in profligate waste; idle men and idle tools, as Increase Mather, Michael Wigglesworth or any other American Gothic type would tell you soon enough, provide a playground for the devil.

"Look on the economy as a vast factory," Mr. Sheinbaum argued. "When it is shut down, or partially shut down, goods and services are not provided, incomes are reduced, profits are diminished; the total economy is slowed down. The slow-down goes back to a lack of money or purchasing power. There is no sense in any factory's producing what it cannot sell."

At the beginning of 1963, he said, 5.6 percent of the labor force was out of work, due to technological changes and economic dislocations. These people were not receiving paychecks, so they were not buying; the goods and services they might have been demanding were not being produced; the profits that might have resulted from the additional $30 to $40 billion dollars worth of goods they would have spent, had they the wherewithal, was nowhere to be found. Though my grasp of the dismal science has always been feeble, I had no trouble understanding this much.

"We need more money, more purchasing power, then," I concluded triumphantly. "Yes, we do. And one way to get it is to free for private purchases some of the money that has been going into taxes. High taxes cut profits, limit private spending, and discourage business from investing in new equipment."

Here is where I had trouble. "Cutting taxes of course will mean cutting back on governmental expenditures, won't it? But which ones will we cut back on? Defense? That takes the biggest bite. Foreign aid? That is dangerously inadequate as it is. Social security measures? I would not want to see them go. Veterans' benefits? That doesn't sound likely. We can always slice a little here and there, but wouldn't wholesale cutbacks have political and social consequences that we really cannot afford?"

"Now you are talking like a balanced budgeteer," my economist friend told me.

"But, as David Lawrence says, anybody can see that the government should not spend what it does not have. That is simple enough to understand. Even government has to be run on a business-like basis."

"Let's just look at what business does, then," Mr. Sheinbaum said. "Even you must know that the days when a small business man saved his profits and reinvested them for further expansion are forever behind us. Technology and the sheer bigness of our economy have made the individual entrepreneur as anachronistic as the gold standard. When you say business now, you are talking about the corporation. The corporation gets its capital from a variety of sources. In 1961, for example, in order to invest $34 billion for new plants and equipment, American corporations used undistributed profits and floated $3.5 billion of new stock equities; they also borrowed $9.5 billion. When that debt is paid off, and it will be, the same corporations will add new and probably larger debts to expand further. If there is a business-like procedure, this is it."

He went on to douse me with a splash of facts and figures. I learned, for instance, that the federal government's debt increased by 12 percent between 1947 and 1961, but corporate indebtedness throughout the nation rose 217 percent during the same period. At the end of 1961 the significance of the public debt in the total economic activity of the nation was exactly half what it was in 1947, whereas the ratio for corporations had increased by 50 percent.

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"*I* worry about balancing my books. Why shouldn't the government? That's how David Lawrence puts it in his column, and it makes sense," I told him.

"You worry because you are afraid of foreclosure. You are afraid that the mortgage company may pick up your house again, or that the TV set will have to go back. But the government's creditors would be acting against their own interest were they to foreclose. At the end of 1962 the total size of the federal debt was about $305 billion. Of this, almost $88 billion was held by governmental departments, like the social security insurance agency. So what you actually had there was $88 billion loaned by one arm of the government to another—no possibility of foreclosure in that situation. Of the remaining $215 billion debt, almost $65 billion was held by individual Americans with savings bonds. What was left was owed to banks, insurance companies, and other corporations, and they are just as interested in the government's future as the government is in theirs. In essence, then, you can say that the public holds the mortgage against its own government—and the public isn't likely to foreclose."

"What about inflation? They always talk about inflation."

"Inflation is something to worry about, but not in the way you think. After a slack in the economy, any new purchasing power will result in the 'factory's' increasing its output to meet the demands of those who are newly able to get what they want. When the demands become so great that productive facilities are actually scarce, the shortages will begin to cause higher prices. Too vigorous a policy, the releasing of too much purchasing power, then, would create inflation. That is why it is important that tax reductions be properly gauged."

I listened. I even took notes. But no matter what, "deficit spending" had a negative, dubious ring to it.

"The words do sound negative," my confrere admitted, "but the policy is positive. It is designed, remember, to stimulate private spending. Don't forget that the Government's revenue depends on the total level of income. If a cut in taxes increases economic demands and puts more people back to work, these people will have to begin paying taxes that they are not now paying. And this increased revenue in turn can wipe out the deficit caused by the tax reduction that had the happy effect of putting them back to work."

"Please," I told him, "I would like to get that clear enough so that even the youngest of my father's grandchildren can understand it."

"Put it this way, then," he said: "You are unemployed; I am not. If I don't have to pay as much taxes this year as I paid last year, I will spend the money I saved by buying goods that will put you back to work. Then next year you will have to pay taxes on what you earned by producing what I bought with the money I held out from taxes this year. If there are enough of you, paying high enough taxes, you can make up the deficit that the Government thought was necessary to put you back to work."

I think I will put the whole thing off until I notice my father's grandchildren reading David Lawrence's column.

JOHN COGLEY

Richard Horchler

Managing the News

Under the Kennedy Administration the temptation to withhold or manipulate information has apparently met no resistance at all

PRESIDENT KENNEDY has been having credibility trouble again, especially in regard to Cuba and United States-Soviet relations. And if the problems involved were not so serious, it might almost be funny to watch him at his press conferences grow more and more irritated at questions repeated and repeated. Is he sure the Russians have taken all their missiles out of Cuba? Have the launching sites really been dismantled? Are there any missiles hidden in caves? What about Soviet conventional arms strength? Several times at a recent conference Mr. Kennedy said, "I don't know how to make it any clearer," before embarking on still another repetition of an answer. He did not, fortunately, ask why people don't seem to believe him.

Such a question would not be hard to answer. For one thing, there are the already historic statements by Arthur Sylvester, the President's Assistant Secretary of

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Defense for Public Affairs. Mr. Sylvester provoked a flurry of excitement with his "news as a weapon" observation after the Cuba showdown last fall: "The generation of news by actions taken by the government becomes one weapon in a strained situation. The results in my opinion justify the methods we used." That the statement was widely misquoted—with "by actions taken" left out—does not alter its significance. Some weeks later, in response to a newsman's question, Mr. Sylvester went so far as to say that the government had a "right to lie to save itself."

Yet what Secretary Sylvester said was shocking only because he said it. That is, nobody could be surprised that a government official would hold such beliefs, but it was extraordinary that he should state them so nakedly, and for the record. By leaving out the standard pieties about the public's need for knowledge and America's reliance on a free and independent press, Mr. Sylvester seemed to be expressing a government position of untraditional cynicism and unscrupulousness in regard to the control of news. The implication seemed to be that, in our new sophistication, even lip-service to the old ideal of government accountability to the people had become unnecessary.

A number of voices were raised in alarm, understandably, over Mr. Sylvester's revelation of New Frontier belief in the management of news. Yet surely the Sylvester statements did no more than spell out the theory of a long-observable Administration practice. Mr. Kennedy himself has come close to spelling it out on a number of occasions, starting with his querulous lecture to the American press after the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco. But even without such open expressions of belief in the use of news as a political weapon, the Kennedy Administration has shown itself in practice to be both remarkably sensitive to the power of publicity and eager to use it for political advantage.

Dating back to his earliest campaigns, Mr. Kennedy has unapologetically trimmed his sails to the winds generated by polls and pollsters. He has used the mass media, especially TV, with shrewdness and skill, from the 1960 debates with Nixon, to the televised press conferences, to the rocking-chair TV interview, to Defense Secretary McNamara's exceptional two-hour Cuba briefing of several weeks ago. More importantly, and apart from what might be called "image projection," official Administration policy on the release of factual information—most obviously before, during and after the abortive Cuban invasion of 1961, during the missile controversy of last year and finally during the October blockade—shows the President to have been and to be an unabashed believer in the necessity of managed news.

THIS IS not to say that President Kennedy and his Administration represent something altogether new and strange on the American scene. All governments are more or less inclined to secrecy and the control of public knowledge, in the interests of stability and security, if nothing else. Even with the best intentions, the leaders of any government will tend to equate the welfare of the nation with their own continuance in power. As Secretary Sylvester put it, "Basically, I think it is characteristic of any party in power to make itself look as well as it can, or to make its failures look not so bad."

Moreover, the present Administration, like the last few before it, finds itself responsible for the national welfare in a time of catastrophic danger and difficulty. Our government has become huge and cumbersome precisely at a time when its responses to danger must be immediate and efficient, when the speed of communications and the technology of nuclear-missile warfare leave no margin for error in decisions and actions bearing on national security. And the complexity and technicality of these security questions today inevitably lead to greater and greater reliance on the "expert" and less and less on the relatively ignorant ordinary citizen. Unquestionably, the pressures toward government secrecy and control of public information are many, and they are strong.

But while to comprehend may be to forgive, comprehension does not reduce the malignancy of a situation. It is true that all governments by their nature incline to secrecy and news control, and that world conditions, especially our not-so-cold war perils, increase the pressures in that direction. The conclusion to be drawn from these facts, however, is that it becomes all the more important to resist these pressures as they are intensified. And under the Kennedy Administration the understandable temptation to withhold or manipulate information has apparently met no resistance at all. Instead we have news management (a typically businesslike, New Frontier term), "enforced more cynically and boldly than by any previous Administration when the U.S. was not in a war," as Arthur Krock declares in the March *Fortune*. Not only is this Administration policy, but it is policy defended in principles of "news

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weaponry" and "informational directives" which confidently ignore another principle—that of the people's right to know.

On this point, Hamilton once told Jefferson, "Your people, sir, is a great beast," and argued that the masses could not be trusted to govern themselves. Jefferson's answers have become—or used to be?—classic American doctrine. He insisted that the people themselves are the only safe custodians of their liberties. "In every government on earth," he said, "is some trace of human weakness, some germ of corruption." And again, "Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the form of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question."

Have we now found angels in the form of New Frontiersmen? If we have not, and if the people are still the only safe custodians of their liberty, they must have knowledge on which to base their judgments. Insofar as they are denied such knowledge, to that extent is the principle of self-government denied. This is the malignancy of the managed news policy: not only does it prevent the people from knowing what they must to govern themselves in any real sense, but as it divides the nation into an informed elite and an ignorant mass, it works also to make and keep the mass—that is, the people—incapable of responsible political judgments.

WHAT PRESIDENT Kennedy and his Administration are doing with U.S. governmental news policy is, therefore, justly to be viewed with alarm. Unfortunately, however, the sins of the Administration are not the only or even the major cause for concern. Of course power tends to corrupt. But if it is in the nature of the beast for governments to lie in self-protection, to extend the control of information from matters of security to matters of policy and any kind of political advantage, then it would seem that the cure for this condition will not lie merely in exhorting the beast to change his nature. The immediate answer to government efforts to use the press, it would appear, must be efforts by the press to resist these attempts. And far more worrisome than the Administration's determination to make the press an agency of government is the fact that America's free and independent press, so far as I can see, is putting up so puny a struggle for its freedom and independence.

With a few notable exceptions, the complaints being raised against the Administration's news policy are coming not from editors and journalists but from politicians with highly visible partisan motives. Arthur Krock's indictment of Administration news management in *Fortune* is an instance of journalistic resistance to this policy, but its force is weakened considerably by Krock's record of resistance to the Administration on numerous less noble issues, such as segregation, states' rights, reapportionment and the Katanga "freedom fighters." In Washington, increasing numbers of G.O.P. spokesmen have taken to inveighing against the President's news as well as every other kind of policy, and at least one investigation of government news policy has been scheduled in Congress. Alarums about news management have come most recently from such libertarians as Dwight D. Eisenhower and Senator Thruston Morton. But from the press itself extraordinarily little is heard.

In the past couple of years there have been occasional outbursts of indignation over government threats to freedom of the press, but newspaper columns and editorials on the subject have been notable, under the circumstances, more for their scarcity than anything else. Even more disheartening is the fact that newspaper interest in the danger to press freedom seems to be roused only by the Administration's most explicit statements on news management, and not at all by its daily practice. It is not surprising that American journalists have expressed concern when the Administration has told them it was managing the news, and above all when official spokesmen have used certain sacred phrases, like "freedom of the press." But during the weeks and months between crises, such as our several Cuban emergencies, and the issuance of "informational directives" and "right to lie" manifestoes, our newspapers have shown small interest in the problem, or even realization that it exists. The suspicion arises that many representatives of the press would not know they were being managed unless they were told so.

Except for such excitements as Arthur Sylvester's speeches, then, scores of American newspapers give their readers no hint that the "news" they are reading has been "generated," "leaked," provided not by journalistic legwork and thought but by a government handout which is "not for attribution." Millions of Americans read the news of national events almost wholly in wire service stories which limit themselves scrupulously to a recitation of "the facts." Yet the facts without context are often meaningless; sometimes, when the news is simply that various officials and agencies have issued pronouncements that in other lands would be called propaganda, the facts are so misleading as to be vicious.

AN EASY explanation for this docility and inaction on the part of the American press might be the ignorance of its reporters. Arnold Beichman, in an article in *Encounter* a couple of years ago, described the typical wire service reporter, for instance, as "half-educated, limp before the magnitude of events and purveying facts he barely understands, let alone the truth about the facts." But there is more involved than this, I believe. There is the enormity of the flood of information

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which the journalist must cope with today in a world which has shrunk and where government activity has grown and spread at a dizzying rate. The pundit may be able to sift and weigh this data at his leisure; the working reporter may well spend all his energies in the mere task of charting the surface movements of events. There is also the problem of "objectivity" and the real difficulty of distinguishing "background," "commentary," "interpretation" and "slanting." The easiest, if not the best, solution to this problem is to stay as far as possible from the suspicion of slanting and limit reporting to the bare, although undigested, facts.

Still, these latter difficulties are occupational hazards, worse today only in degree. There are more basic and more dangerous factors, I think, in the newspapers' lack of vigilance against government encroachment. Most obviously, there is the Cold War, and its demands of patriotism on every American. Although it is not all-out war, and although it has endured for a decade and a half, the struggle with Communism has kept the nation in an off-and-on state of crisis and anxiety. As in every time of peril, the citizen in this time has been called upon to give his government total, unquestioning support. Criticism and fault-finding, any activity which is "damaging" to the government, may be condemned as "giving aid and comfort to the enemy," and few Americans, including journalists, are eager to risk either being or being thought disloyal. Thus patriotism and timidity lead the journalist away from whatever might seem to be "un-American" (i.e., injurious to the interests of his government); on the other hand, patriotism and vanity, encouraged by government flattery, lead him to think of himself as a kind of government-partner in the achievement of national goals.

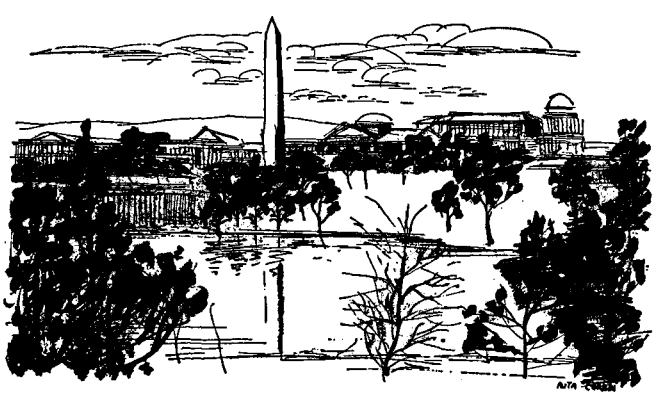
The truth, of course, is that a free press must be anything but a government-partner, and it has seriously confused its role if it thinks of itself as responsible for the achievement of its government's interests, or even in any direct way for the maintenance of national security. A free press is responsible to the people, not the government, and its function is to print the truth, with the faith that the truth, whatever it is, will advance the interests of the people. Government has its own function, and if its leaders believe that secrecy and lying are essential to security and national policy they will, surely, act accordingly. But government should have to withhold and misrepresent in the face of a press which is committed in the opposite direction, to finding and printing the truth.

A drift toward conformity, orthodoxy, the surrender of individual judgment, the valuation of security over freedom, is an apparently inevitable consequence of war, cold or hot. Such a drift may be discerned in the American press, but ultimately no more than anywhere else in the nation's public life. For the final and most dispiriting comment to be made on the state of the press is that it is only a part of a cultural whole. While the press informs and guides the people, who cannot survive in freedom without it, it is also true that the press is a reflection and product of the society it serves. A free people will establish and maintain a press that is free; an unfree press denotes an unfree people.

THESE illiberal tendencies of our times—in government, press and people, and in the interaction among the three—lead inescapably to dark thoughts of the future of freedom and self-government in this nation. In his book *Peril and Promise*, journalist Gerald W. Johnson consoles the premature mourners for freedom in the United States by pointing out that the strength of the American people lies not in their resistance to folly or any other temptation but in their amazing ability to recuperate. This is true, but there is always the fear that one day they will drift past the point where the recovery of freedom is still possible.

The danger to the principle of self-government is today, as every day, real. It can be seen, I believe, in our citizens' increasing servility toward authority, in the outlawing of "controversial" people or ideas, in the definition of "Americanism" in terms of loyalty to the status quo. It can be seen in those polls which from time to time show the "average citizen" recoiling in horror from the ideas expressed in the Bill of Rights. It can be seen in the passivity of people and press to the infringements on liberty in the "managing of news." But with all the evidence of America's weakened commitment to individual liberty, freedom of the mind and the legitimacy of dissent, we need not and must not concede that we have passed the point of no return.

For there are hopeful signs too. On the question of managed news alone, there is hope in the political reporting of at least certain journalists in certain publications; in the ability of large numbers of Americans to ferret out the truth, if only through what Woodrow Wilson called "balancing lies"; in the laughter which sometimes marks a press conference statement not intended to be funny. It is a hopeful sign, finally, that President Kennedy is indeed having credibility trouble. If America's people and press are to survive in freedom, he will have lots more.



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ROBERT BARRAT

De Gaulle's Would-Be Assassins

The General is not beloved by the masses

FOR several weeks French newspapers have been carrying long accounts of the trial of those charged with the assassination attempt on de Gaulle at Petit-Clamart. In these stories can be found a number of excellent army officers, who are good fathers of families to boot, declaring at length that de Gaulle is a traitor and a tyrant. Now, after the eighth abortive attempt to assassinate the Chief of State, a certain number of his Rightist and Leftist opponents forcefully pose the question: must our Chief of State be killed?

This question is not asked so much in moral terms, for in the fierce political struggle which divides the small handful of men and groups that contend for the possession of power, the life or death of a statesman weighs no more than that of an enemy general in time of war. It is rather the weight of political consequences which is to decide whether de Gaulle should, or should not be assassinated.

J. J. Servan-Schreiber, editorialist of the *Express*, believes that it would be very dangerous for France to become another Iraq, where the political class would be inclined to violent seizures of power. In the *Nation Française*, a monarchist weekly, Pierre Boutang wrote last August at the time of the Petit-Clamart attempt, that he had to restrain a feeling of disappointment on learning that the plot had failed. Now, however, he condemns the assassination attempt at the Military Academy. De Gaulle appears to M. Boutang, despite his Algerian policy, as the necessary midwife of a France strong because she is nationalistic.

Very few of these journalists ask themselves about the immediate and practical consequences of the disappearance of the President of the Republic. Still, the uncertainty which his disappearance would lend to civil peace makes the overwhelming majority of French people fearful of its consequences.

De Gaulle is not a popular Chief of State. I mean that his coldness and his arrogance do not make him beloved by the masses, and he arouses no popular fervor the way history—or legend—tells us Saint Louis, the young Louis XV, or Bonaparte did. The portrait of Marshal Pétain adorned numerous French mantelpieces between 1940 and 1945. Very rare today are the French families who have de Gaulle's portrait hanging above their fireplace.

ROBERT BARRAT is The Commonweal's regular correspondent in Paris.

If you talk with almost any Frenchman he will not hesitate to tell you that, despite the improvement in the standard of living and the stability of the franc, everything continues to go badly in France because of de Gaulle's "ideas of grandeur." We lack schools and houses; the national income is badly distributed, since half the workers still earn less than six hundred francs a month; the plans for an atomic striking force are going to bankrupt us and threaten to get us in bad with our allies, etc. In short, the domestic policies of the Chief of State leave the French people discontented, while his foreign policy disconcerts and worries them. If de Gaulle had been assassinated last week, he would not have been mourned.

But the French people would have been seized with panic—exactly as a division which loses its commander in the midst of battle. The French have, more or less confusedly, the impression that they have escaped civil war or a fascist dictatorship only by a miracle and that they are still in mid-passage. If de Gaulle is assassinated or dies a natural death tomorrow, all that they escaped in 1958 can again come forth: the activist generals will seek to take over power with the complicity of politicians already in office. The present regime is perhaps like that of the liberal monarchy or the Second Empire; what we will have tomorrow has every likelihood of being the Francoism of the aftermath of the civil war.

GAULLISM is therefore far from appearing to the popular mind as an ideal regime to which one should adhere enthusiastically. It is accepted as a lesser evil which preserves us from something worse. Besides, there is nothing in sight to replace it. "But by whom would you want to replace him?" is what invariably ends all discussions of the French political future.

To change things would almost take a miracle, I mean the uniting of the French Left, which for the last five years before de Gaulle was the cream puff of political debate. But this prospect of a worker-led great democratic party seems more than ever merely a pious hope. In spite of the tactical alliances of the last legislative elections, the difficulty of achieving the united action of Socialists and Communists continues unabated. The union of Socialist parties, which had raised some hopes in French youth, is only "an unconstituted aggregate of disunited personalities."

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The leaders of the trade unions are too fearful of losing their followers to leave the terrain of social demands in order to descend into the political arena. Of course one must never wholly despair of democracy in France. It is rather striking, for example, that there is a proliferation of circles and clubs—Jean Moulin, Tocqueville, Saint-Just, Vie Nouvelle—in which the restive aspirations of a number of young Frenchmen find expression.

In their desire for personal commitment these young people do not wish the mediation of the traditional political parties. It is rather in the activity of numerous economic, social and cultural groups that they discover new forms which perhaps one day will compel the parties to re-examine their role in other than purely electoral terms. The objective of this political regrouping by the young is no longer to court the honors of office but rather to seek control of the levers of power to be found in the French economy.

Such are the reflections provoked by these days of plots and violence. Until a democratic replacement has been made ready, three-quarters of the French people will continue to want the General kept in power. And they tremble every time he leaves the Elysée Palace or seeks to go among the people, as he has recently declared he intends to do again this spring. For several years French stability at home will continue to depend on the life of de Gaulle, and we know that from now on he is in continual danger, at the mercy of some Secret Army gunman. Several hundred men have actually sworn to take vengeance on de Gaulle for the misfortunes of French Algeria. They will not go back on their oath.

Little Diary on Growing Old (XVIII)

Carlo Betocchi: L'Estate Di San Martino
(1961 Mondadori)

Poor sinner that I am, my face
is crisscrossed by so many paths
and traces as if no longer mine,
like a woodland edging into fields.

The stories they are telling
are impossible to speak of;
to other sins, indeed to all,
was I open: and therefore

I am become an evil tumor
full of shadow: I am
unworthy of pity; but I myself,
hovel and refuge to those

who, as I have lived, are living.

Translated by I. L. SALOMON

THE STAGE

Seize the Moment

OFF-BROADWAY was at one time a nourishing place for new talent, but for the past couple of years almost nothing has appeared there to put a stop to our yawning. The suburbs seemed bent on imitating the city, so that exact miniatures of Broadway domestic dramas or the shrunken heads of Richard Rodgers or Lerner and Lowe kept being trundled onto all those lesser stages. Or else we would be offered the most arbitrary, factitious and unlovely examples of experimentation, "absurdity" turned into nonsense, Ionesco's face on the body of the Village idiot. And, finally, there have been the sorrows of performance, the ineptness that seemed cherished like a valued tradition, as though to act well in a theater seating less than 299 persons were a kind of betrayal.

I have been using the past tense but I don't wish to imply that the situation has changed, since heavy mediocrity and outrageous innocence continue to be our chief, dismal alternatives. But during the past few weeks I have been given a few glimpses of hope, or if that is too strong a word and commits me too tightly to the future, at least, then, a few moments of satisfaction, which occurred unforeseen in the course of two evenings of plays by new American dramatists.

Oliver Hailey's "Hey You, Light Man" is a soft fantasy on a hard theme: the pressures that keep us from our dream of freedom and the persistence of that dream in spite of everything. The central figure is an actor who in an effort to escape the demands of marriage and fatherhood, for which he feels unfitted (he once brought home the wrong child from an afternoon at the circus), takes to living on the stage of the play he is currently performing in. There he is joined by a woman from the audience who has fallen asleep and been locked in the theater. The two begin to create a wry, tender relationship in which blessings are exchanged. For she is a proletarian who has been immersed in nothing but facts while he is a sophisticate who has lived almost wholly in the imagination; their confrontation provides a liberation for her and a ground for him.

In time the actor's family discovers his whereabouts and comes to reclaim him, less out of love than from a sense of "fitness." The couple flee to another stage, are pursued, and he is literally roped back to domesticity. But he has left the woman with a capacity for transcendence, the knowledge of how to summon the "light man," the stage hand who is a figure for the imagination, which remains the central means we have for escaping the bitterness of finitude.

Mr. Hailey is far from being expert. For one thing his use of Pirandello-like techniques is never startling

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enough or integrated stringently with the events. For another, the fantastic elements—the family's appearing to the actor's sight but not to the woman's (who, I must find room to say, is played rather beautifully and with extraordinary clarity by Madeleine Sherwood)—seem strained and merely ingenious rather than a real source of power to transform the non-fantastic. And his language, while sometimes acute and affecting, cannot sustain any significant revelation or deliverance. Yet his play, so reminiscent of John Updike's novel, *Rabbit, Run* (the actor, rather than fight, has become a "great runner"), is an earnest attempt to break into the open, and, as I have said, it gave me a few moments of pleasure. *(At the Mayfair)*

MURRAY SCHISGAL'S twin bill, "The Typists and the Tiger," recommends itself chiefly because of the presence of Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson, who make up the entire cast. Whatever interest "The Typists" may have—it is an almost wholly conventional play about two people who spend lives of frustration and pathetic dreaming side by side in an office—is imparted by their performances; as for "The Tiger," a far more original drama in which the systems of clichés by which we keep existence at bay are comically undermined, they work the miracle of creating in us a rich gratitude for the sights and sounds of the stage's truest life, the representation of what exists only as dream and notation until it is brought to palpable existence. I was happy to be present at the Wallachs' fifteenth wedding anniversary and to toast them, along with the rest of the audience, in champagne. *(At the Orpheum)*

RICHARD GILMAN

THE SCREEN

Twinkle, Twinkle, Big Star

IT IS a curious though interesting matter of timing that Glenn Ford, who has turned up during the past few years in such tiresome remakes as "Cimarron" and "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," should suddenly appear this month in two amusing new comedies. And, what's more, he displays in both a nice light touch suitable to their plots.

The funnier of the two is "The Courtship of Eddie's Father," in which Ford plays a recent widower whom everyone, especially his six-year-old son Eddie, is trying to push into marriage. Most likely prospect is the nurse-divorcee who lives in the apartment across the hall and is played as a cute-but-sensible trick by Shirley Jones. However, she and Eddie's father bicker continuously about child-raising and other matters, so Eddie, who misses his mother and his dead goldfish and remains friendly with Shirley, looks around for another wife for his father. At a Broadway Playland, he meets a well-stacked dumb bunny, delightfully caricatured by Stella Stevens, and Eddie is sure his father is all set. But Glenn introduces his disc-jockey friend (Jerry Van Dyke) to stunning Stella; they fall head over heels; and Glenn is attracted to a cool, calculating fashion consultant (Dina Merrill) whose beauty and managerial ability don't appeal at all to Eddie, a reader of comic books in which all the bad ladies have skinny eyes like Dina's.

While the plot of "Courtship" is thin, its jokes and decorations are very amusing. Joe Pasternak has given the picture his usual slick, handsome production; and the cast, responding well to Vincente Minnelli's deft direction, are fine throughout. In the key role of Eddie, little Ronny Howard successfully avoids being obnoxiously precocious and manages to display a great deal of boyish charm. Without being at all kittenish about it, Glenn Ford succeeds in being charming and poignant as a hard-working father—even though he knows he's losing the happy widower game.

GLENN FORD plays a much more complicated game in "Love Is a Ball" during the course of which he works for Charles Boyer who's in the match-making business on a grand scale. Boyer has effected 174 perfect marriages among wealthy clientele who have paid him very

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handsomely indeed. In his current project, he hopes to match his new protégé (Ricardo Montalban), who is a real grand duke but without money or social graces, to a forty-million-dollar heiress (Hope Lange). A staff is hired to educate Montalban and makes the duke physically attractive but socially blank. Ford, a former cowboy and racing driver, is to teach him the fine points of horsemanship and automobile racing. After this difficult job is accomplished, Glenn takes on a job as chauffeur at the heiress' villa where he's to do a little high class spying for Boyer.

Most of this is fairly interesting, thanks to the good cast, which also includes Ulla Jacobson, as Boyer's secretary, and Telly Savalas and Ruth McDevitt as the heiress' uncle and grandmother. Although the plot is dragged out too long and is rather slow in getting started, its jokes and side issues, like the training of Montalban and the contretemps between Hope Lange and Ford, are quite funny. Ford is properly American and standoffish about his not-quite-proper work; and Miss Lange, looking beautiful and haughty, does a delightful satire on the conventional conception of an heiress.

For that matter the entire cast in "Love Is a Ball" seem to be having a ball. The picture's greatest asset, however, is its lovely color photography of the French Riviera. Producer Martin H. Poll and director David Swift never lose an opportunity to show the people and their playground at their best and worst.

JACKIE GLEASON comes through at his playful best in "Papa's Delicate Condition," a pleasant little comedy-drama about a small-town Texas family in the good old days before World War I. The story, stemming from the biographical book by Corinne Griffith, who became a famous movie star in the twenties, describes the ups and downs of the Griffith family, most of the downs being connected with papa's drinking. Gleason, turning on his charm full blast, makes papa a lovable character but also succeeds in putting over the point that drinkers can be very trying at times. His wife (Glynis Johns), older daughter (Laurel Goodwin), and father-in-law (Charlie Ruggles) find him very trying indeed. And why not—when the lovable, irresponsible papa does some very foolish things, like buying a drug store (so he can get a drink on Sunday) and even buying a circus (so his younger daughter can have the pony she wants more than anything else)? This little girl, Corinne, is nicely played by Linda Bruhl who manages to make this apple of papa's eye girlish and cute without being too sweet or tomboyish. She adores papa, and his delicate condition bothers her very little.

As it works out, the story is absorbing even while it is not entirely believable. In the long run, papa's drinking would probably be a pain in the neck. But in this likable, amusing, and often poignant picture, everyone comes to love papa. No doubt it is Gleason who makes this papa so lovable—no matter what Corinne Griffith had to say about him. PHILIP T. HARTUNG

BOOKS

Symbol and Myth—the Substance of a Pyschic Life

Pseudonyms of Christ in the Modern Novel. By Edwin M. Moseley. University of Pittsburg Press. $4.95.

by John P. Sisk

ANYONE who reads contemporary criticism knows that a good deal of time and energy has been going into the detection of mythic patterns and Christ figures in fiction. With this book Edwin M. Moseley has now made a full scale contribution to this important way of reading imaginative literature. His purpose is to deal "with the peculiarly Western version of the savior-archetype in the figure of Christ and . . . with topical variations of the Western version as the men-and-the-moments change." His central conviction, expressed in the words of Mircea Eliade, is "that symbol, myth, image belong to the very substance of the psychic life; that you can camouflage them, mutilate or degrade them, but never extirpate them."

Professor Moseley begins his study with three fairly orthodox variations on the savior-archetype: as Tragic Hero in *Lord Jim*, as Death-in-Life and Life-in-Death in *Crime and Punishment* and as Archetypal Son in *Fathers and Sons*. The following treatment of Lawrence's "highly sensual" variation on the pattern in *Sons and Lovers* and *The Man Who Died* (in which Christ merges with the lost Osiris) is an abrupt departure. Subsequent chapters present Christ as Doomed Youth (*All Quiet on the Western Front*), as Missing Orient (*The Great Gatsby*), as Social Scapegoat (*Light in August*), as One Avatar (*Passage to India*), as Brother to Man (*The Grapes of Wrath*), as Marxist Variant (*Bread and Wine, Man's Fate, Darkness at Noon*), as Existential Antichrist (*The Stranger*) and as Old Champion (*The Old Man and the Sea*).

The book, reflecting as it does its author's interest in Freud, Jung, Eliade, Fraser and Campbell, is incidentally a common reader's introduction to comparative mythology. It is also a study of the problems of the artist in society and of the changing attitudes towards the human condition over the past century. Incidentally, too, as one might suspect from the above titles, the book cannot avoid pointing up the revolutionary involvement of its Hero with the poor and the dispossessed. All of these services are performed in a readable style that is pleasantly free from technical jargon.

Professor Moseley, who is Dean of the Faculty and Professor of English

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at Skidmore College, advises us that he is writing not the inward-turning "new" criticism but the outward-turning "newer" criticism, which means that he tends to be more concerned with subject matter than with esthetic evaluation. He has obviously, however, chosen to examine novels he considers to be artistically successful dramatizations of his great theme—though it seems to me that he has been led to overvalue *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Old Man and the Sea* because they are so adaptable to his purpose.

Nevertheless, the outward-turning mythic approach proves to be both stimulating and vital to meaning. The chapter on *The Great Gatsby* (in which Fitzgerald's Waste Land is brilliantly related to Eliot's) is itself sufficient indication that Professor Moseley's method is far from being a modish way of dodging around the critic's proper business. Almost as good are the chapters on Conrad, Turgenev, Faulkner, and the combined treatment of Silone, Malraux and Koestler.

In his concluding chapter Professor Moseley observes that "the novels we have discussed may very well be distinguished from each other as adjustments to the abyss." The abyss, as modern man knows it, becomes more terrible in proportion to the absence of a climate of transcendent belief. When this climate is missing, says Professor Moseley in a sentence that gathers together all the themes of his book, "old men ready to die wait in vain for religion, young men are fooled by false springs, tired men futilely seek rejuvenation, misdirected men search unsuccessfully for the East, and yearning men call the god but he does not come."

The Power of Hatred

Occasion for Loving. By Nadine Gordimer. Viking. $5.00.

by Samuel Hynes

THE WORK of British Commonwealth writers sometimes raises the kind of question that American writing raised for Matthew Arnold—is it a separate category of writing in English, or is it all part of one literary family? Arnold said, in his confidently dogmatic way, that American writing didn't exist, and one often feels the same way about, say, Canadian or Australian fiction. But South Africa seems a special case, a country in which the problem of race relations, and the violent solution to the problem which that country has imposed upon itself, have created an atmosphere of daily melodrama which makes South African writing its own category.

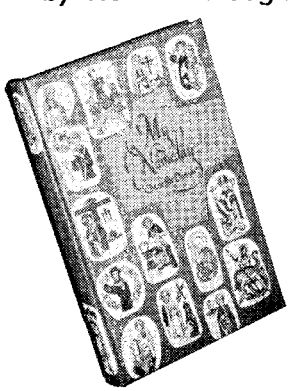
The case of Nadine Gordimer offers a dramatic example of what I mean. Miss Gordimer is a South African born and raised, educated in Johannesburg and presently living in the Transvaal; her three novels and three books of stories are set in her own country, and make vivid use of local settings and situations. But she is not in any sense a local-colorist; her peculiar gifts are the gifts of a fine speculative intelligence, the kind of mind that orders and judges experience in moral terms.

Reflecting upon the central problems of existence—the problems of love and freedom and human dignity—such a mind makes of fiction a high moral art. But morality and melodrama are, in the nature of things, antithetical, and the brutal melodrama of the South African racial situation is an obstacle to the fullest realization of Miss Gordimer's superb talent: the finest intelligence cannot manifest itself undistorted in an atmosphere of nightmare. Intelligence and nightmare are both evi-

"Make homes holy"

MY NAMEDAY—Come for Dessert

by Helen McLoughlin



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dent in her new novel, *Occasion for Loving*.

The "occasion" of the novel is miscegenation—a love affair between a black man and a white woman. The African, Gideon Shibalo, is a painter who is blocked and distracted from his art by his color, and the compelling priority of political action; the woman, Ann Davis, is beautiful but irresponsible, arrogantly and recklessly white. Their affair, from its clandestine beginning to its destructive end, is the central event of the novel; but the central intelligence is another white woman, Jessie Stilwell, and it is her response to the relationship, and its implications, which composes the meaning of the book.

Jessie, the middle-aged wife of a university lecturer, is tolerant, liberal, and intelligent; but she is helpless to affect the destiny of the lovers. She sees that for Ann, Gideon's color, and the social taboos it carries, appeal to an instinct for self-destruction which finds "a greedy answer" in Gideon's own complex feelings about himself. She sees that their love lives on an egoistic rejection of other people, a kind of counter-ostracism of society. And she sees that it cannot come to good, because it carries in it the same corruption that defiles the world around it—that the love of Ann and Gideon has its origin, as well as its inevitable end, in the racial taboos of a white world.

For Jessie, the story of the lovers bears a further lesson. It demonstrates the power of racial hatred to distort human relationships, even if one is reacting against that hatred—that a liberal attitude may be as false and dehumanizing as an intolerant one.

Miss Gordimer does not fall back on the easy belief that tolerance is virtue, and that virtue will prevail, and her honest confrontation of the complexity of human failures in this "occasion" is an impressive quality of her book.

Of Jessie and her husband, at the end of the affair, she writes: "They came again and again to the stony silence of facts they had set their lives against. They believed in the integrity of personal relations against the distortion of laws and society. What stronger and more proudly personal bond was there than love? Yet even between lovers they had seen blackness count, the personal return inevitably to the social, the private to the political. There was no recess of being, no emotion so private that white privilege did not single you out there; it was a silver spoon clamped between your jaws and you might choke on it for all the chance there was of dislodging it. So long as the law remained unchanged, nothing could bring integrity to personal relationships."

In that conclusion, Miss Gordimer is writing, not as a novelist completing her form, but as a South African acknowledging a situation that can have no honest completion. The situation gives the action of her novel a somewhat anticlimactic inconclusiveness, though it offers a compensating integrity. That form and honesty should so conflict is Miss Gordimer's problem as a South African novelist; one can only conclude that the book is as good as it honestly could be.

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On Revolution

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Simone Weil

Selected Essays, 1934-1943. By Simone Weil. Chosen and Translated By Richard Rees. Oxford University Press. $7.

by John Ratté

CERTAIN authors achieve after their deaths reputations so compelling and yet so problematical that their partisans relentlessly pursue the ephemera of their literary lives in search of material which will confirm the suspicion of supreme talent, or provide the key to the enigma of personality. Acton was such a figure. Book reviews, polemic, letters, lectures were put forth after his death by way of compensation for the great works he never wrote: such collections continue to appear sixty years after his death and scholars will never end browsing in his shoe-boxes of notes.

There are still more tragic, or at least more obviously tragic examples of this phenomenon—James Agee the most striking of recent years—the young man or woman who is kept by death from producing a body of work of such quality and quantity as to make posthumous publication a luxury rather than a necessity. Such is the case with Simone Weil.

Only one of the fourteen books which bear her name was written for publication and even that work, *The Need for Roots*, was published after her death, in 1943. *Selected Essays*, the most recent of the eight English translations of her works, draws its material from two anthologies of short writings which have already appeared in French. They make up a book which obscures the problem which has made Simone Weil a figure of continuing interest to readers who are not concerned with historical speculation and social theory: the problem of Simone Weil and the Church.

This is not a deliberate evasion. The author of these essays on Hitler and Mussolini and the Roman Empire, the power of words, social democracy, the revolt of the *Ciompi*, the "cold war" aspects of East-West relations on the eve of World War II, is bound to be the essential Simone Weil to those readers who see her mysticism and door-step Catholicism as at best a betrayal of the rationalist tradition, and at worst the manifestation of a psyche as deprived of emotional expression as thoroughly as her body was deprived of food during the years before her death.

Yet the fact remains that her passionate and uncompromising love for Christ and His poor (for her His true Church) was the force which drove her to share both the depersonalizing life of the factory workers and the exhausting but rewarding life of the peasant farmer. It drove her to the cause of anarchy and human dignity in the Spanish Civil War. It drove her into the streets of war-time London, into the slums of Harlem. To sacrifice her own personality in the face of injustice, for the cause of justice, was the end which directed her action from the time that she slept on the floor as a student so that a student poorer than she could have her bed, until the hounding ended in tuberculosis, malnutrition (she would not eat as long as her countrymen in occupied France were starving) and death at the age of thirty-four.

It is not strange, then, to find that this force forms the fundamental ideas reiterated in these pieces, just as the force of contemporary events in the years from 1934 to 1943 shaped her ideas of the European past and her hopes for the future. The humanist may claim that the compelling power of her concern for human freedom is independent of the religious foundations she gave it in these years. The historian may claim that it is a distorted vision of the past which boldly links modern totalitarianism, be it of the fascist, Nazi, communist, or democratic varieties, with the total power of imperial Rome, and sees in the vanished Albigensian civilization of Languedoc a better Europe which-might-have-been. Neither criticism does anything to lessen the force of these essays, which, if anything, may appear more relevant today than they did at the time of their original publication.

The genius of Simone Weil's mind is peculiarly her own, even though it is in the tradition of Charles Péguy

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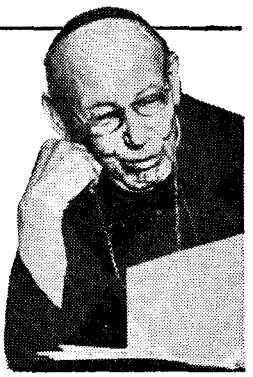

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and Léon Bloy in its mysticism and its concern for the poor. It is also a powerful expression and extension of the European intellect of the twentieth century, an intellect which has absorbed the classical and Christian heritage in philosophy, history and social thought with a thoroughness that leaves it free to range back and forth through time from fifth century Athens to contemporary France. In its ranging, her mind draws parallels, suggests analogies and makes connections (both safe and wild) in a tireless effort to increase man's understanding of his own nature and of his society in order to create new possibilities for action.

That Simone Weil's contribution to this intellectual tradition is of a peculiarly realistic tone in spite of its speculative drive is only one of the paradoxes awaiting the reader of these essays. Commenting on the failure of the French Popular Front of 1936, she writes, "it is always dangerous to have a doctrine behind you, and especially one which includes the dogma of progress and an unshakable confidence in history and the masses. Marx is not a good author for forming the capacity for judgment: Machiavelli is much better."

Yet this student of Machiavelli hated *Realpolitik*, be it that of the Caesars, the medieval popes, in whom she saw their successors, or Hitler. And she phrased her hopes for western man in terms far from Machiavellian: "The masses are impotent to create civilization unless they are inspired by a genuine elite." But her elite was not that of Pareto or Sorel or Lenin: "What is needed today is an elite to inspire the virtue of spiritual poverty among the ill-used masses: and for this it is necessary that the elite shall be poor not only in spirit but in fact. This elite must experience every day, both in spirit and in the flesh, the pains and humiliations of poverty." If such an elite should ever offer leadership, Simone Weil will be its patron saint.

REVIEWERS

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